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ABSTRACT

Contributed by high school English teachers across the United States, the activities contained in this booklet are intended to promote the effective teaching of English and the language arts. Activities in the first section of the booklet focus on language exploration--the subtle nuances of meaning, rhythm in poetry, and the power of the word--using such methods as the writing of amusing poems, the creation of riddles, and a focus on genealogy. Activities offered in the second section are designed to stimulate an appreciation of classic and contemporary literature, and to suggest techniques for introducing literary works to students. Specific activities in this section deal with identifying satire, enlivening Shakespeare study, developing political awareness, novels from the Romantic period, research skills, fables and fairy tales, book reviews, and mythology. Activities in the third section, intended to provoke interest in writing, build students' confidence in their writing skills, and stimulate the flow of words and ideas, deal with journal writing, writing about nature, newswriting, newspaper essayists, interviewing, and developing writing process awareness. (HTH)

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IDEAS Plus

A Collection of Practical Teaching Ideas

Book Four

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Foreword

IDEAS Plus and its quarterly companion *NOTES Plus* are the principal benefits of NCTE Plus membership. Almost a year ago, NCTE Plus members were sent the third edition of this collection of practical teaching ideas. A subsequent survey showed that the majority of NCTE Plus members would like to have these collections in hand as they begin the school year, and so we are sending this fourth edition even earlier this year.

This new edition of *IDEAS Plus* was assembled primarily from the ideas submitted at the Idea Exchange sessions at the last two NCTE Annual Conventions and the last Spring Conference. Beverly Haley adapted and edited the forty-three teaching ideas that appear here.

1 Language Exploration

Touched by poetry, language is more fully language.

Octavio Paz

One of the most important things we as English teachers can give our students is a love of language—an appreciation for subtle nuances of meaning, for rhythm in poetry, for the power of the word. The ideas in this section will help you do this with imagination and fun. They teach a variety of things, from vocabulary to research skills, using such methods as the writing of amusing poems, the creation of riddles, and a focus on genealogy.

The Joys of Reading Aloud

The joys of reading aloud too often are lost to students once they move out of elementary school. To keep this all-but-lost art alive, I make time for oral readings.

As in any activity, though, the readings won't succeed without adequate preparation. While oral reading is especially suitable for debate and drama classes, I like all my students to share in this experience.

First, I demonstrate to the class by reading aloud a short prose or poetry selection. I read it several ways: first, in a monotone; second, using inappropriate accents and phrasing; and finally, the way I think it should be read to create the intended meaning and effect. Then I write several lines of the piece I've just read on the chalkboard, allowing space between lines. I mark the lines with symbols to indicate how they should be phrased and accented, comparing the symbols to those used in music scores, and asking students to copy this list of markings:

/ = pause
// = stop
> = softer
< = louder
___ = accent or stress

Now it's my students' turn. I distribute short prose and poetry passages (double-spaced to allow marking room) that evoke a strong emotional response (sometimes all the pieces express a similar emotion, such as love or fear or outrage; sometimes the emotions are different in each selection). I ask students to read their selections silently several times—the first time quickly, followed by two or more careful readings. As homework, students experiment with different ways of reading the passages aloud. When they decide on the most effective reading, they mark their passages with appropriate cues.

Then, on the appointed day, students take turns presenting their oral readings. Those not "on stage" fill out evaluation forms for the reader. Occasionally it's fun at the last minute to have students swap papers, reading the unfamiliar passage according to another person's markings after only a few minutes' orientation time.

I find that this activity increases students' awareness and understanding of rhythm, sound, and pacing in a piece of writing—both their own and that of others. Meanwhile, they've enjoyed an aesthetic treat.

Keith C. Younker, Southridge High School, Huntingburg, Indiana

Triple-Duty Review

In an attempt to liven up a scheduled American literature test review, I have invented a way not only to refresh my students' memories but also to force them to focus on general concepts. The bonus is that they also receive extra practice in identifying and correcting run-on sentences and sentence fragments.

On transparencies for the overhead projector, I show the class a series of "sentences," each relating specific information from the unit on Edgar Allan Poe and the short story. The catch is that any given item might be a run-on sentence, a sentence fragment, or a complete sentence. (It might include other sentence structure problems as well, such as dangling and misplaced modifiers or subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent agreement.) Three examples of these constructions are:

> Edgar Allan Poe is the Father of the American short story, he wrote many bizarre stories which show in great detail, maybe because his life was bizarre, too.
>
> Black Cat, told from a first person point of view, you can't believe what he tells you, he's crazy!
>
> Which in "The Fall of the House of Usher" occurs because of the poisonous gas which rises from the tarn and causes the house to decay and causes the Usher family to deteriorate, too.

On test review day, I project each transparency onto the chalkboard so student volunteers can point out sentence errors and take suggestions from the class for constructing complete sentences with logically related thoughts. As students divert their attention from wondering what will be on the test to translating the awkward, ambiguous constructions into clear, correct ones, the facts and concepts of the unit also become clearly defined. Lively discussion about the meaning and the significance of a statement, as well as how to punctuate it correctly, turns slumbering minds into active ones.

Test results after such review sessions are consistently high—and the essay questions free from sentence fragments and run-ons (and other structural problems we've focused on). The triple-duty review more than fulfills my goals.

Theresia Hartz, Cleveland Central Catholic High School, Cleveland, Ohio

Rights, Responsibilities, and Violence

Before my sophomores begin the literature unit on social responsibility, I like to prepare them for understanding the concept of rights and responsibilities. I begin by dividing the class into groups of three to five. Each group is to come up with a list of ten rights for all students (or for all human beings). For example, the right to their own work—no copying by others (this point helps them later, when we do research papers, to grasp the idea of plagiarism), the right to their choice of classes (no discrimination on the basis of sex or intelligence), and the right to understand one learning step before moving on to the next.

Because all the members of a group must agree on each right, spirited discussion fills the room. The discussion enlarges when the class reconvenes to compare group lists. From this exchange, students can clearly see how people's ideas about "rights" are not always the same and how one person's right may infringe on that of another. Students begin to see why violent emotions and behavior occur when a person or a group feels a right has been violated.

Some of the topics that come up in the class discussions include: What items should be on a teacher's bill of rights? How might such a bill conflict with a students' bill of rights? What do the class lists reflect about American culture? (You may want to review the Constitution's Bill of Rights.)

As we move into the social responsibility unit, and even when we study new topics, we continue to relate them to the bill-of-rights idea. For example, I might ask students to compose a bill of rights for Juliet in a

study of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or one for Jerry Renault in Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. Or I might have them write a bill of rights for the author rather than for a character.

The lists can generate a variety of writing assignments. For example, in reading Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, I might ask students to write a defense for Charles Darnay's denunciation of his name and his country, to build an argument for or against Sydney Carton's right to marry Lucie Mannette, to explain why Jerry Cruncher does or does not have the right to rob graves, or to justify Madame Defarge's apparently ruthless pursuit to extinguish the lives of all aristocrats.

The short time invested in initially constructing a students' bill of rights (or a bill of rights for human beings) yields dividends limited only by time and my own imagination.

Lorraine Vitale, Long Beach High School, Long Beach, New York

Learning in Action

My noncollege-bound students need plenty of variety in approaches to learning. I've found that actual physical movement gets their mental machinery moving, too. Here's what I do when we have an assignment that seems complex or boring but that also covers a concept they should know.

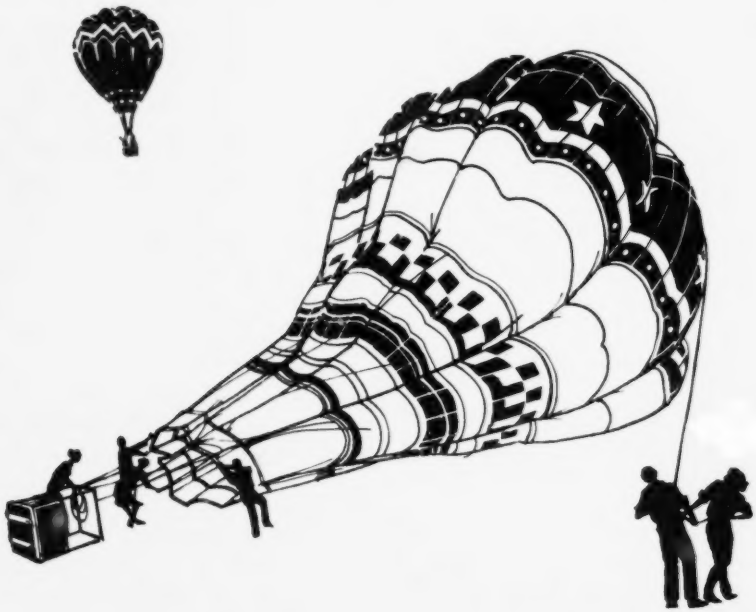
I make up a list of questions about the assignment (it might be a story emphasizing reading between the lines or a lesson on usage or rules for punctuation and capitalization). Then I explain to the class that, as I call their names, they'll rotate alphabetically in asking and answering each question. For example, Bill Adams reads aloud question 1 and Judy Appleby answers it; then Terri Benson reads question 2 and Jason Binder answers that question. When there are enough questions for a second round, those who asked questions on the first round answer them on the second, and vice versa.

Before the question-and-answer sequence begins, I ask all the students to stand beside their desks. The two who will read the question and give the answer come to the front of the room. Then I tell the other students to listen carefully and to decide whether they agree with the answer given. I caution each person to reach a decision individually. Then, students who agree that an answer is correct move to the front of the room. Those who disagree with the answer move to the back. Those who partially agree stand somewhere in the middle. Once students have scattered themselves along this agreement continuum (or if everyone disagrees with the answer), we hold a discussion to identify how and why each person

arrived at his or her conclusion. Then the questioner and answerer return to their places and a new pair take their turns.

This method often serves to clear up misunderstandings I might never have guessed students harbored had we not used this technique. Meanwhile, the students learn the material because they've actively participated in it.

M. S. Yarger, DuBois Area Junior High School, DuBois, Pennsylvania



Modes of Transportation—an Investigation

In our increasingly mobile society, students take for granted—and passionately guard their right to—"wheels." I take advantage of their fascination with transportation as a way of developing their language arts skills.

Some assignments I've given my students that use modes of transportation for increasing language skills successfully include:

1. *Conducting a survey:* Make a list of as many modes of transportation as you can think of, both the common and the extraordinary. From this list select ones to use in preparing and taking a survey.

Questions you might include in the survey are: What modes of transportation have you used recently? Why did you choose these modes? For what purpose(s) did you use each form of transportation? How satisfying or frustrating was the experience? Why? What were the advantages and disadvantages of each? Would you use the same mode for the same purpose again? Why or why not? What type of transportation would you like to see invented? Keep the survey anonymous, but record pertinent facts about the people, such as age group, sex, job, and where they live.

Distribute the survey to about twenty-five people, tabulate the results, write a report, and make observations or conclusions based on your findings.

2. *Observation:* Spend at least one hour in a train station, airport, or bus terminal. Record your observations of travelers, employees, and those who greet or say good-bye to the journeyers. Turn your observations and responses into an essay or short story.
3. *Interview:* Prepare a set of questions for and set up an interview with a ship's captain, bus driver, airplane pilot, train engineer, travel agent, or taxi driver about his or her job and form of transportation. After the interview, prepare a news story to share with the class.
4. *First-person experience:* Take a trip by skates, skis, hot air balloon, glider, or other not-so-ordinary form of transportation. Describe your experience—what you see, how you see it, the emotions you experience, the feelings of speed or slowness, and so on. In writing, compare your reactions with those of others who take the same or a similar journey.
5. *Dictionary:* Use a dictionary to define words linked to transportation. Include words like *vehicle, gondola, ricksha, trolley, donkey, camel, elevator, lift, surrey, monorail,* and others. Make a poster using words and pictures from your list.
6. *Pamphlet:* Collect pamphlets on travel by train, bus, plane, or ship. Write an outline of the information found in one of these. Comment on sales techniques, the type of traveler that the pamphlet appeals to, and how the information and style would be different if the pamphlet were designed to appeal to a different audience—for example, members of the jet set, families, get-away-from-it-all types, adventure seekers, cultural-experience seekers, the sports-minded.
7. *Almanac:* Locate information listing inventors of various modes of transportation. Note the nationality of each inventor as well as other pertinent facts about the circumstances surrounding the inven-

tion. Write a paragraph that summarizes the information you found and draws a conclusion from or gives an insight into the facts.

8. *Biography:* Choose a famous person associated with transportation; for example, Carnegie, Ford, Otis, or one of the Wright brothers. Read about his or her life, then write a report introducing this person to your classmates.
9. *Record/Statistics Book:* Collect facts about one type of transportation (for example, submarine, truck, or bicycle). Learn about the fastest, the earliest, the largest, the most unusual of its type. Then write a tall tale based on one or more of these records.

Eileen Koliba, Madison Elementary, Fort Lavaca, Texas

Search for Identity, or, What's in a Name?

No topic attracts teenagers more than the topic of themselves (and appropriately so). I take advantage of that interest in self to teach research, interviewing, and writing skills. Each student looks for information about his or her own name—conducts a personal search for identity.

To begin, I ask students to acquire a "names" vocabulary of the following words:

given name	alias	namesake
surname	maiden name	pen name
stage name	pseudonym	nom de plume
misnomer	nickname	patronym

Then we talk about the care people take in naming—for example, a pet, a building, an invention, or a discovery. We talk about the way parents choose a name for a baby; we discuss how and why some people change their names (along with the recent trends in a wife's taking or not taking her husband's surname or hyphenating his surname and hers). We talk about how we attach emotions to certain names—for example, we expect someone named Alexander Charleston Fremont Fairchild III to be quite formal. We discuss how sometimes a person's name seems to fit his or her personality—or is it that the personality develops to fit the name?

That leads to some comments about how parents or grandparents will sometimes say such things as, "A Smith doesn't pick fights," or "The Hamiltons have always been excellent mathematicians." Names sometimes define or limit who and what we are or become. A person may feel the need to "live up to" a name or, conversely, "live down" a "bad" name.

Now the time is right to make the assignment. I explain that each student will research and write about his or her own name—both given name and surname. The search has two parts: library research and personal interviews. First I send students to look in several books about names and tell them to take notes on and document what they find. Then they talk with parents and other adult family members. I provide the following questions as a guide, telling students they're free to add to the list should interesting twists develop.

Given Name

1. Were you named for anyone? If so, whom? Why? What is your reaction to that?
2. When and how did your parents decide on your name?
3. Do you have a nickname? If so, is there a story behind it?
4. What are your feelings about your name? What is the best thing about it? The worst?
5. How widely used is your name? (Some name dictionaries give charts on this.) Name some famous people, both living and dead, who have your name. How many people do you know personally who share your name?
6. If you'd been born ten, twenty, or fifty years ago, would you be likely to have this name?

Surname

1. Look up your last name in several surname books. Note any discrepancies in information. What is the origin of your name? Is it a *patronym* (like *MacNeil, Johnson, O'Casey,* and *Fitzgerald*), a *place name* (such as *Dell, Mountain,* or *Boston*), a *nickname* (like *Little, Black,* or *Shorter*), or an *occupation name* (e.g., *Smith, Taylor, Farmer,* or *Miner*)? What is its national origin (French, Irish, etc.)?
2. Has your surname been spelled the same way for as long as your family can remember? If not, what was the previous spelling? What circumstances surrounded the change?
3. How common is your surname? (Check the charts in books of names to find your name's rank. Check the telephone directory to see how prevalent your name is in this locality.) How many people do you know personally who share this name? Any famous people? Why might there be more people with your surname in some areas than in others?

When students complete their data, they follow the usual theme-writing procedure to develop personal essays about their names. I encourage them to focus on something that makes their names truly individual, something that makes that name stand apart from others even when they have many elements in common.

Then we all have fun—and get to know one another better—sharing the results through oral readings or through a class anthology of name essays.

Edna L. Neely, Altoona Area High School, Altoona, Pennsylvania

Tell-and-Show Dictionary

Today's students may spend as many hours per week viewing television programs and movies as they spend in school. Because film media wield enormous power—and because film techniques have parallels in composition and literature—I've designed a project to raise my students' awareness of what they're seeing and how that influences their beliefs and behavior.

On the first day of the project, I provide students with a list of basic film terms like the ones below (I've used other terms for different purposes), explaining and showing examples of each term as we move through the list together.

Pan, or panoramic, shot: shows a wide view of scenery

Long shot: includes the focal object and its surroundings

Medium shot: shows the subject with a little background

Close-up: shows only part of the subject (fills the frame)

High angle: the camera looks down on the subject, making it appear smaller

Low angle: the camera looks up at the subject, making it appear large and powerful

Flat angle: camera and subject are level, suggesting equality or honesty

Depth-of-field (rack) focus: one point in the picture is in focus, the rest is blurred

Establishing shot: the scene that sets the time and place of action

Superimposition: two pictures taken on the same frame, a double exposure

Overexposed: too much light

Underexposed: not enough light

Normal lens: depicts things without distortion

Telephoto lens: makes objects appear flat and bunched

Wide angle lens: makes objects appear to be spread out

The next day I have supplies in the room—stacks of old magazines, scissors, glue, construction paper, and stapler—which students can use to produce their personal film dictionaries with definitions and illustrations. (In some classes, I've asked students to take their own photos to illustrate the terms.)

As students find magazine pictures to illustrate the terms, they begin to compile their dictionaries, using a separate sheet for each term. Each page contains the picture example of the term and its definition; when all the terms are illustrated, the pages are fastened together. As the students work in this informal atmosphere, the lively exchange of comments and observations becomes a real learning experience.

Now when we view a film in class or discuss a movie that many of us have seen recently, we can use the correct terms, observe the techniques applied, and analyze the effects on the viewer created by the photography.

We also apply the film terms to a writer's techniques when we read a play or a story, commenting on why an approach works or fails. For example, the opening scene or paragraph may be the "establishing shot" that sets the mood and prepares the reader for what follows (does it work?); a detailed description of a particular character is a "close-up" allowing the reader to become acquainted with the person's traits, qualities, and possible motives.

When students learn to think of a story in visual terms, their enjoyment and understanding rise sharply.

Kathleen Lask, Pattonville Senior High, Maryland Heights, Missouri

A Dictionary for All

Students often feel confused and frustrated by dictionary definitions. One of the more difficult problems in discovering meaning for a word is the elusive quality of abstract words and word connotations. To clarify such defining, I ask my students to produce a dictionary of abstract terms, each term to be defined with a sentence that shows, rather than tells, its meaning to four different age groups: young children, teenagers, adults, and senior citizens.

I explain to the students that the sentences need to contain a concrete image that a person from each age group would normally associate with the word. Selections from *Happiness Is a Warm Puppy* by Charles Schulz set their minds running on the right track. Then I give them some examples of how to tailor the image for each age group:

Envy

For children: Watching a baseball player bat a ball when you have trouble lifting the bat.

For teenagers: Watching HIM (or HER) walk to class with someone else.

For adults: Watching a fellow worker get the promotion you wanted.

For senior citizens: Watching a healthy teenager jog down the road.

Courage

For children: Confessing to your near-hysterical parent that it was you who spilled the grape juice on the new carpet.

For teenagers: Not sending an SOS to your family to bring a change of clothes when you get to school and discover this is *not* the date for costume day.

For adults: Standing firm in denying your teenager permission to attend a questionable party that "everyone" is going to.

For senior citizens: Maintaining trust, love, and respect for your grandchildren when they behave in ways alien to your own upbringing.

Then the students are on their own with this list of words:

loyalty	failure	discipline
terror	freedom	courtesy
teamwork	generosity	happiness
friendship	success	sadness
prejudice	tolerance	greed

When we share the results, everyone's understanding of these words is deepened. The images students come up with are far more imaginative than mine. When an image is slightly off target, lively class discussion clarifies shades of meanings.

Marcia Sauvie, Carman High School, Flint, Michigan

Word Histories

To capture my students' interest in words, I show them how to conduct a search for the interesting stories behind the words we use. When a student discovers the history of the word, he or she is able to truly understand, remember, and use it.

First, I demonstrate to the class how to find and interpret information about words. We begin by analyzing dictionary symbols and etymologies (we have a copy of a dictionary for everyone) to glean the information revealed there. Then I show students copies of sources like Garrison's *What's in a Word?,* Longman's *What's behind the Word?,* Funk's *Words and Their Romantic Stories,* and a volume of the *Oxford English Dictionary.* I pick as examples two or three familiar words with different types of histories, having first prepared copies of the pages on which they appear so students can follow along as I explain how to "read" the word history of each.

Next, each student takes time (in class if I have enough sources; outside of class if I don't) to look through dictionaries and other reference books to decide on a word whose story holds a special appeal for him or her. Students carefully read, take notes on (documenting each source accurately and completely), and synthesize all important details. Then they have two responsibilities:

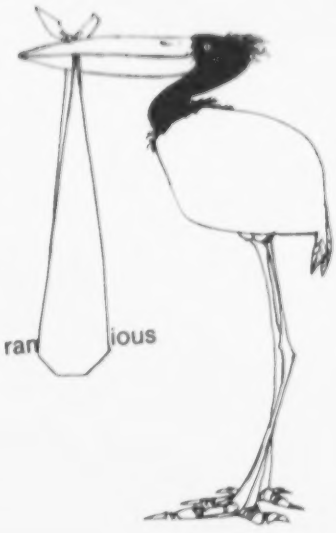
1. To write an interesting history of the word, properly documented and in story fashion.
2. To present the word's story orally to the class as an informal talk, using audiovisual aids to make the talk more memorable. (One of my students wore a toga, laurel wreath, and Nikes to indicate that his word was of Greek origin.)

As the stories are told, all students keep a record of the words, their correct spellings, their current definitions, and their etymologies. When I test the class on these words, scores are invariably high.

Donna Lessenberry Smith, Jacksonville High School, Jacksonville, Alabama

Adopt-a-Word

When a student adopts a word from an assigned vocabulary list, the word then belongs to him or her. Whether the word was chosen for its sound, appearance, meaning, or connotations, it holds a personal attraction for that student.



I first thought of the adopt-a-word idea when I was looking for variety as well as for more active student participation in the weekly vocabulary lessons. Here's how this idea works.

Each week I compose a list of ten words. Some I take from the literature we're studying, some from the grammar text, and one or two from class discussions or writings. After I've pronounced all the words on the list, each student "adopts" one. Adoption means being responsible for making that word understood by and interesting to the rest of the class. Because more than one student will have the same word, I have different students each week do the presentations (though all hand in their written explanations). The student introducing his or her word to the class tells the word's part of speech, derivation, definitions, synonyms and antonyms, and other facts about the word. Besides giving this factual information, the student uses the word in several sentences (with context clues) and tells why the word held a particular interest for him or her.

Another form the class presentation can take is the pantomime or minipresentation. A student may act the word out silently (to pantomime *regicide,* one student "crowned" another and then "stabbed" her), or the student may present something other students would associate with the word (for the word *infirmity,* one student read the poem "Sick" from Shel Silverstein's book *Where the Sidewalk Ends*). Using the tactile dimension along with physical movement is a more memorable approach to vocabulary study than the usual see-hear-write method.

Another activity I use is to ask students to each write a sentence using their word (no definition provided). The qualification is that the sentence clues must make the meaning of the word clear to the rest of the class. If the sentence fails to do this, class participation helps pinpoint what needs to be done to the sentence for it to clearly show the meaning.

"Adopt-a-word" works (test results stand as proof) because students are actively involved in the learning. They feel ownership, responsibility, and caring. And we've all shared in the fun.

Annette Matherne, Houston, Texas

Quote for the Day

Wisdom passes from age to age—from mind to mind and soul to soul—in the form of recorded words. I post some of these words of wisdom in my classroom to stimulate a variety of responses from students. I call this my "Quote for the Day."

I display our daily quotes on a bulletin board near the door of the classroom for all to see clearly. Each quote is enclosed within a poster board frame slightly larger than the 8½"-x-11" sheets bearing the individual messages.

My stockpile of printed quotations grows each term as both my students and I discover new ones to add from every source imaginable—song lyrics, poetry anthologies, inspirational books, graffiti, novels, plays, news stories, Bartlett's and other collections of quotations, etc. I file the quotations under subject headings such as "courage," "search for identity," or "humor," but filing could also be done according to author or style. The poster includes the author's name, the source of the quotation, and any useful commentary I have on the circumstances surrounding the creation of the piece.

Each time I change the quotation in the frame, I have a specific use for its theme or style in mind. We use these quotes

to launch a discussion of the day's lesson.

to analyze sentence structure, diction, style, or figures of speech.

to relate to a school, community, or national event or issue as a stimulus for a writing assignment.

as a journal-entry starter.

to inspire students to create original quotations (the best of these go into the quotations file for classroom use and for posterity).

to provide a source for personal collections of quotations. (Many students voluntarily copy quotations into notebooks, sometimes illustrating or commenting on them.)

to brainstorm other related quotations, or quotations that seem to convey the opposite message (e.g., "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" from the Old Testament in contrast to "Turn the other cheek" from the New Testament). The "variations on a theme" or the opposing philosophies can then inspire lively discussion or writing as well as enlarge understanding of a work of literature currently being studied.

Cathie M. Brown, Estill County Middle School, Irvine, Kentucky

Artists Illuminate Authors

What an author does to create an emotional response or drive home a message can be difficult for students to grasp, especially when they are visually oriented. I've found that comparing a work of literature to a work of art illuminates the more abstract medium of writing for my students.

Suppose I want to introduce a story with a theme of loneliness. Before assigning the story, I gather at least six prints (the school and public libraries lend them, and I've also collected many of my own) that strongly portray a sense of loneliness. In class, I post the prints or hold them up one at a time, then ask students to think of one word that could serve as a title for each—or all—of the paintings. They might use words like *sadness, depression,* or *loneliness.* Then I ask why the painting triggers this particular emotional response. Usually they answer with such observations as dark colors, a small subject "lost" in a vast expanse, dull texture, facial or body expressions, dilapidated buildings, elongated shapes, or the arrangement (or composition) of the picture. Sometimes they comment on what's been left out as well as what's included.

Next we talk about the artist's means for expression—color, form, line, texture, light and dark, perspective, composition, and movement or stagnation. Then I divide the class into groups of three to five, assigning a print to each group. Together, the students agree on the emotion their print evokes and list five reasons that support their choice. Using these reasons, the group composes a paragraph describing how their painting creates a feeling of loneliness (or sadness or depression or fear). The group then decides on a spokesperson to show the print and read the paragraph to the class the following day.

After the art showing, we draw parallels between how an artist produces a work of art to create a mood or make a statement and how an author writes a piece of literature to evoke the same effects. Just as everything the painter does sets forth, unifies, and reinforces the scene or portrait so that it conveys "loneliness" to the viewer, so the writer produces a similar effect using a writer's tools—choice of subject, choice of words and their arrangement, and the images these call forth (figures of speech). The artist works with brushes, paint, and canvas; the author uses pencil (or typewriter or word processor), paper, and words. Both use the artistic vision, but each expresses that vision through a different medium.

Next we look at the words the groups used in their paragraphs to express feelings of loneliness. On the chalkboard, we list more words that feel lonely. We talk about the various rhythms of words strung together to create a mood—why long, smooth, leisurely phrasings produce a dif-

ferent effect than short, staccato, fast-paced phrasings do. We examine the importance of soft and harsh sounds as well as the choice of subject and the surrounding environment—all working together toward a single effect.

The artist-author analogy can be expanded further by drawing parallels between writing and music, writing and dance, writing and a sport. Each comparison enlarges understanding.

Mildred L. Jackson, Kempsville High School, Virginia Beach, Virginia

Riddle Research

I'd like to share an activity I've used that successfully gives students experience in research, documentation, synthesis, and creative writing. Each student picks a famous author to research and is cautioned to keep the author's name a secret. When students have gathered sufficient information, they each write a riddle about their author.

Sometimes I make this a homework assignment; other times I make arrangements to take my class to the library on a particular day. Either way, I provide the librarians with a list of the names the students will be researching so they'll be prepared to assist as necessary.

These are the criteria I ask students to meet:

> They must use at least three different types of resources (no more than one encyclopedia article is allowed).
>
> They are to use note cards to make full bibliographical citations for their sources (I provide examples).
>
> They must take notes on their findings. I instruct them to be careful to use quotation marks when necessary and to give the page number for every notation they make.

Based on the information in their notes, I have them compose a riddle from which the class is supposed to try to guess the author's identity.

I give students the following directions:

1. Plant at least *fifteen* clues to the author's identity in your riddle.
2. Use at least *five* footnotes in the riddle and use *all* your sources.
3. Provide a complete bibliography for your sources.
4. Make two copies of your riddle and write the answer to the riddle on the back of each copy. One copy should include the documentation as well as a cover letter describing your detective work and the type of information each source gave you. The documented riddle

and your cover letter will be graded. The other riddle should be written without documentation. You will read this riddle aloud to the class, respond to their questions and comments, and then post the riddle on the bulletin board.

Here's an example of a riddle (minus documentation) written by a student from San Angelo, Texas.

I am an English novelist.
I worked in a shoe blocking shop.
I was born very poor.
My family and I lived in a prison for several years,
But I had "great expectations" in life.
I became famous at 24 years of age.
I wrote a book that had a good "twist" to it.
It frightened many of my readers at first.
I always dreamed of working in a "copperfield" with a friend named David.
I heard many tales in the twin cities about which I wrote later on.
I wrote 15 major novels.
I died on June 9, 1870.
My real name is John Huffam!
Who am I?

Sherry Hubbard, San Angelo Council of Teachers of English, San Angelo, Texas

Portraits in Poetry

Writing poetry teaches students to focus on the essence of a subject, to write concisely, and to choose words and arrange them for a vivid, exact picture. I want my students, who lean toward wordy, vague prose, to get plenty of exercise in paring down and searching for accurate, lively word choices. But I don't want to scare them off with the word "poetry," so I offer light verse forms to choose from for this assignment along with an interesting topic—each other. As a bonus, the activity gives practice in interviewing, those speaking and listening skills that sometimes get short-changed in the classroom.

Before interviewing begins, I have students generate a list of possible questions to ask classmates about themselves. I write these on the chalkboard as we discuss together which will draw out interesting responses and which will yield only brief factual answers. I emphasize that prepared questions should be used only as a guide—that a good interviewer is a

good listener who asks questions based on the interviewee's responses rather than being restricted to a preconceived agenda.

I try to pair students who don't know one another well. The exchange of interviews should produce information about each person that makes him or her stand apart from others in the class. If we do this activity at the beginning of the semester, I use the portraits as a way for students to introduce themselves to one another. If I save it for later in the course, we tailor the interviews to produce facts about the interviewee that most people in the class won't know. (Another option is to invite an interesting guest, such as a foreign exchange student, to class for a group interview.)

I tell students they'll be using the information in the interviews to introduce the interviewee or to show some aspect of that person that most people aren't aware of. I encourage them to draw out more information than they'll use. That way they'll have enough details to try several kinds of focus in their articles until they discover the most interesting slant.

Then I explain that they'll use the details to produce personality portraits written as a cinquain, a name acrostic, or a limerick. Most of my students are familiar with these forms, but they need a review and an example of each. So I furnish them with a sheet containing that information and encourage them to experiment with different forms, different groups of details, and a variety of word choices and arrangements before selecting the one they'll use as their final portrait.

Cinquain: a five-line poem

Title: Use the person's name.
Line 1: Give two adjectives describing the person.
Lines 2, 3, and 4: Each begins with an *-ing* verb that tells what the person does.
Line 5: Use another word or name for the person.

Example:

Mrs. Mason
Nervous but enthusiastic
Trying to remember 150 new names and faces
Shuffling from room to room
Hoping we will enjoy this semester
A new teacher to Mt. View.

Name Poem: an acrostic

The initial letters of each line spell out the person's name.

Example:

MASON

Monday morning dieter, religiously
A sinner by noon.
Struggling to juggle all her hats
Of wife, mother, teacher.
Never anxious for vacations to end.

Limerick: a short, humorous poem that follows a particular pattern

Lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme.
Lines 3 and 4 rhyme.
Lines 1, 2, and 5 have eight to ten syllables each.
Lines 3 and 4 have five to seven syllables each.

Example:

Mason

There once was a teacher named Mason.
In her class no time was a'wastin'.
If ten classes you've missed,
Be prepared to be hissed
And enrolled in a high school in Payson.

When the poetry portraits are complete, I ask students, one by one, to write their poems on the chalkboard and then read them aloud to introduce the person portrayed.

Marybeth Mason, Mountain View High School, Mesa, Arizona

The Cinquain as a Learning Tool

In an attempt to find a way to help my students pick out main ideas in their reading—and to remember that information—I came up with the idea of using cinquains to promote fact retention.

To get the idea across to my class, I begin by using news articles. First I explain the cinquain pattern and give examples of how to follow it, filling in main ideas of a news article. Then students begin writing their cinquains.

Cinquain: a five-line poem

Line 1: one word for an object or that introduces the subject
Line 2: two words that define or describe the subject
Line 3: three words that describe an action relating to the subject

Line 4: four words that express an emotion or attitude about the subject
Line 5: one word that sums up lines 1 through 4

Examples of student-produced cinquains

Headline: Royals Needed Ninth-Inning Magic
Royals
Underdogs, fighters
World Series magic
Long odds against them
Winners

Headline: Friendly Talk Opens Summit
Weapons
Reagan, Gorbachev
Privately negotiating guidelines
Greater prospects of progress
Peace

Once students catch on and are consistently producing concise and precise summaries of news stories in this simple verse form, they can then transfer the technique to other types of reading (such as social studies, literature, grammar and writing rules, science). Soon they can throw away their cinquain crutches and capture succinctly the essence of any informative reading material.

Doris Negaard, William Chrisman High School, Independence, Missouri

2 Literature

Literature is language charged with meaning.

Ezra Pound

To help your students derive meaning from the works they read, here are fifteen ideas that deal with a variety of literary genres and periods, from the Greek myths to modern nonfiction. There are creative suggestions for class presentations and writing assignments, as well as ideas for role-playing, a mock trial for the conspirators in *Julius Caesar,* and a design-your-own-Inferno project to complement study of *The Divine Comedy.*

Design Your Own Inferno

When my world literature students complete their study of *The Inferno* section of Dante's *The Divine Comedy,* I feel they can more fully understand the author's interpretation of the levels of the sins of humankind and the punishment appropriate to each if they apply the technique to analyzing the sins of the modern world.

I divide the class into groups of three to five students. Each group discusses the types of sins that exist in the modern world and decides in what order—from least sinful to most sinful, going through Dante's nine levels—to classify the sins. Then each group decides on an appropriate punishment for an offender at each of the nine levels. Some groups even invent new words!

The next day students bring any special materials their groups need for constructing a visual representation of their concept of a modern Inferno. I supply some materials, such as scissors, glue, old magazines, colored construction paper, and tagboard. When the paste is dry on each group's depiction of the nether regions, the students reassemble as a class. Each team, in turn, explains their project. Then we display them in the room. The effect is frightening enough to make even the most sinful students repent and change their ways—at least for a few days.

Teresa Jurden, Clarkston High School, Decatur, Georgia

The Sharp Edge of Satire

How can students know whether a piece of writing is straightforward or whether it carries the sharp edge of satire? If some of your literature students take Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" seriously, they may first experience shock, then anger and indignation. These emotions rapidly turn to embarrassment when they learn the truth (usually not in the kindest way) from classmates who caught the satire. Even those who recognize Swift's ironic tone may not be able to say how they sensed he wasn't using a straightforward style. And I find that satires like Alexander Pope's mock epic, "The Rape of the Lock," are even trickier for students to decipher.

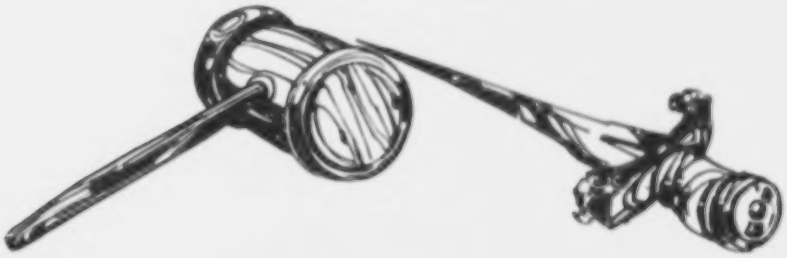
To help my students analyze how satire works, we begin a list (I on the chalkboard, they on paper) of examples from an assigned reading. Next to each item, we identify what is satirized and the technique the author uses to achieve his or her purpose. It helps to think of satire as ridicule or as a forceful device of using stinging wit to show disapproval. Some of the techniques that students will point out include:

> *overstatement* or *exaggeration,* as in Swift's, "I compute that Dublin would take off annually about twenty thousand carcasses. . . ."
>
> *understatement,* as when Swift writes, "I grant this food [children] will be somewhat dear."
>
> *parallel structure* that places the trivial on an equal plane with the important, as in Swift's, "A child . . . will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter."
>
> *elegant phrases* used in place of specific ones, as when Swift says that landlords have "the best title to the children" instead of "the right to eat babies."
>
> *verbal irony,* as when Swift says that his proposal "would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards or enforced by laws and penalties."
>
> *irony of situation,* again from Swift, "Infants' flesh will be in season throughout the year."

To make students' understanding of satire even clearer, I have them write satires of their own on a modern social or political topic after they have read several examples from different authors and compared their intents, tones, and effects. Students are free to choose topic, form, type, rhetorical devices, and audience. Along with the satire, students write an

explanation for a younger student who might mistake the satirical tone for a straightforward one. The original satires are shared in class, along with discussion of techniques that worked and those that didn't. The sharing is both fun and instructive.

Carolyn Huff, Brazoswood High School, Lake Jackson, Texas



Brutus—Guilty or Not Guilty?

My students get a different perspective on the plot and characters of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* by staging a series of criminal trials for the leading conspirators. I divide the class into five groups, each group being responsible for gathering evidence from the text of the drama and planning a strategy for the trial of one of these conspirators: Cassius, Brutus, Decius, Casca, and Portia. When preparations are complete, each team takes a turn at presenting its case while the other class members serve as jurors.

The purpose of each trial is to establish whether the defendant is innocent or guilty of first- or second-degree murder or of manslaughter (we discuss the definitions for each term). The team members need also to keep in mind that this crime is more than a murder—it's an assassination of a powerful man. Each team decides which member will serve as judge, prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, defendant, witness(es), and court recorder. All members of the team collect information from the text, both stated and implied, that applies to their assigned conspirator. They may also do research on procedures used in such trials through reading and/or consulting with local attorneys.

Set aside five class days for the trials, one conspirator's trial each day. As each team presents its case, I ask students to follow this procedure:

1. The judge calls the court to order and gives instructions to all present.
2. The prosecuting attorney makes an opening statement and establishes the verdict he or she is seeking—first-degree murder, second-degree murder, or manslaughter.
3. The defense attorney makes an opening statement.
4. The attorneys take turns calling each witness and the accused to the stand. The line of questioning must be based on the events of the play.
5. If either attorney deviates from the text, the judge may stop the proceedings and reprimand the offending attorney.
6. At the close of the testimony, the prosecuting attorney speaks first, making some concluding remarks and asking the jury for a verdict of guilty. Then the defense attorney makes closing remarks and appeals to the jury for a verdict of not guilty.
7. The judge instructs the jury (all other class members) to base their decision on the validity of the information presented.
8. The jury votes by secret ballot. The judge and court recorder tabulate the votes, using the majority vote as the jury's decision. The judge then announces the verdict and frees or sentences the defendant.
9. The judge adjourns the court.

Carole Maltz, Miami Beach Senior High School, Miami Beach, Florida

Getting Better Acquainted with the Bard

Often both teacher and students feel that studying a Shakespearean play will be a long and tedious task. Try dividing your class into five teams, with each team reading a different comedy (or tragedy or history). Each team then becomes responsible for making a presentation to the class on its play. When all five presentations have been made, class members will have an in-depth knowledge of their team's drama plus a working knowledge of four others. They'll also have an enlarged view of Shakespeare as one of the world's greatest dramatists. And because of heightened individual involvement and responsibility, the time will pass quickly.

Here's how I organize for this study unit. First I divide the class into teams and assign a drama to each team. (For comedies I've used *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Tragedies studied include *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.) I ask each student to read carefully the assigned play as well as some literary criticism about it. Next, team members discuss the plays according to

guides I provide and in terms of their own questions and ideas as well. Each team then decides what method of presentation to use in order to give the class a short summary of the plot; an indication of what the characters are like; the background and setting for the play; some of the conflicts (inner and outer), issues, and themes of the play; and the author's style and techniques. Teams may decide to recite and explain some of the play's most quoted passages. I encourage the use of visual aids. Some that students have used are collages, maps, charts, posters, games, puzzles, drawings, costumes, videotaped scenes acted out by the group, a scene of the play acted out in a modern adaptation (such as a soap opera or a musical), and a newspaper or TV news broadcast reporting events of the play. Let your students be creative—they'll surprise and please you.

When all the presentations have been given, I involve the class in a discussion that produces a chart illustrating Shakespeare's use of similar plots, themes, and dramatic elements across the different plays. Some of the categories the chart can include are characters in disguise, supernatural elements, biblical references, eavesdropping, coincidences, two different worlds or levels of life depicted, and one character gaining power at the expense of another.

Mildred L. Laxson, Pearland High School, Pearland, Texas

Developing Political Awareness

Even after your American literature students have studied such writings as Benjamin Franklin's "The Way to Wealth," Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, and Philip Freneau's "On a Memorable Victory," they may not have a good idea of the early American patriots' spirit of nationalism. Here's an assignment that will help you to develop that spirit and cultivate in them a sense of political awareness.

Following a class discussion of the content and writing styles of the authors you've studied, lead your students to see that all these people wrote for the same purpose—to heighten their readers' political awareness and to stir them to action. Next, explain to your students that they are to become modern patriots for the next couple of weeks. Their charge is to persuade their audience to take action to change undesirable political practices or to support and encourage development of productive ones. I give my students these instructions:

First Week

1. Leaf through the editorial pages of several different current newspapers and news magazines. Use local, regional, and national publications that take different slants on the news. Identify an issue or topic that appeals to you.

2. Collect at least three articles, editorials, or political cartoons on the same topic. Get as many different views of your subject as you can. These clippings will become part of the total project you turn in on the presentation date.
3. Analyze your collection of articles with an eye toward what other information you may need. Go out and gather more facts if necessary. Begin to form your own views about the issue.
4. When you've gathered as many facts and opinions as time allows, draw your own conclusions on the subject.
5. Express your conclusions (opinions) in *one* of the following ways, remembering that sometimes a straightforward approach is the most effective way to persuade your audience to take action, but a satiric piece can work well, too. Inform your audience of all sides of the issue, remembering that careful use of emotional appeal is the secret weapon that often wins an audience over.
   a. Draw, or describe how an artist might draw, a political cartoon or cartoon strip (similar to *Pogo* or *Doonesbury*) that dramatizes your point or presents the issue. Include captions.
   b. Using either an original composition or a familiar tune, write the lyrics for a protest song. You may play a tape of your composition or perform it live for the class on the assigned day.
   c. Write a letter to the editor, a copy of which you could send to the school and/or local newspapers.
   d. Prepare a three- to five-minute persuasive speech on your topic.
   e. Write a dialogue between two political figures on your topic, complete with stage directions, which can then be acted out by two class members.

Second Week

Oral presentations of the completed projects are given (artists display and explain their works) with a time limit of three to five minutes each.

Claudia McKeller, Cypress Creek High School, Houston, Texas

Never Outdated

Any great work of literature speaks to universal qualities (or to ontological questions, if you prefer) deep within each of us. When students protest that a novel like Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is too dated and too difficult to read, you can help them see how Hawthorne speaks to them yet today. Both during and after reading, select passages

from the novel that stimulate your students to think—and then to write—about the human condition.

This writing assignment asks students first, to explain the passage; next, to tell what it illustrates about the novel; and finally, to show how the passage has meaning in the lives of people today *or* to illustrate the passage with a personal experience. Before students begin writing, you should take one or two sample passages to discuss in class, using the same sequence as the writing assignment.

You'll find many passages that appeal to you and your class, but here are a few to get you started:

1. It contributes greatly towards a man's moral and intellectual health, to be brought into the habits of companionship with individuals unlike himself, who care little for his pursuits, and whose spheres and abilities he must go out of himself to appreciate. ("The Custom House")
2. The moment when a man's head drops off is seldom or never, I am inclined to think, precisely the most agreeable of his life. Nevertheless, like the greater part of our misfortunes, even so serious a contingency brings its remedy and consolation with it, if the sufferer will but make the best, rather than the worst, of the accident which has befallen him. ("The Custom House")
3. There can be no outrage, methinks, against our common nature—whatever be the delinquencies of the individual—no outrage more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame; as it was the essence of this punishment to do. (Chapter 2)
4. Such is frequently the fate, and such the stern development, of the feminine character and person, when the woman has encountered, and lived through, an experience of peculiar severity. If she be all tenderness, she will die. If she survive, the tenderness will either be crushed out of her, or—and the outward semblance is the same—crushed so deeply into her heart that it can never show itself more. (Chapter 13)
5. No man for any considerable period can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true. (Chapter 20)
6. It is a curious subject of observation and inquiry, whether hatred and love be not the same thing at bottom. . . . Philosophically considered, . . . the two passions seem essentially the same, except that one happens to be seen in celestial radiance and the other in a dusky and lurid glow. (Chapter 24)

Joan Butz, Springfield South High School, Springfield, Ohio

Reading, Writing, and the Romantics

I like to use both expository and creative writing in a study of the literature of the Romantic period. When students write about the literature they read, they deepen their understanding because writing forces them to explore the work more fully. Because the word *romance* has a narrow meaning for today's teenagers, I find they fix the identifying characteristics of true Romantic thought and literary form more firmly in their minds when they write about them.

Some assignments I've had success with include:

Expository Writing

1. British Romantic writers emphasized the concept of immortality. Using several poems we've studied that touch on this subject, write about the ways different Romantics expressed those feelings.
2. Compare and contrast *one* of the following topics:
   a. the distinguishing characteristics of the Romantic and the Classical periods.
   b. Keats's "When I Have Fears" and Milton's "On His Blindness."
   c. Shelley's "To Night" and Longfellow's "Hymn to Night."
3. Use Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" as an analogy to a person's journey through life.
4. From the same narrative poem about the mariner, explain the concept that every human being kills his or her own albatross.
5. Argue for or against the premise that the worst law to violate is the law of hospitality (as defined by the Romantics), or, show how the modern interpretation of the law of hospitality differs from that of the Romantics.

Creative Writing

1. Describe a place whose natural beauty appeals to you, or, describe your view of such a place when you visit it again after a long interval of time.
2. Write a poem entitled "(your town), 1986" patterned after Wordsworth's "London, 1802."
3. Write a parody of Wordsworth's "The World Is Too Much with Us" or of Shelley's "Ozymandias."
4. Compose an ode patterned after "To Autumn," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "Ode to a Nightingale," or some other ode by a Romantic poet.

5. Using as a model either a real Grecian urn or a photograph of one, write an original story about one or more of the urn's painted scenes. (Bring the urn into class if you can.)

Carolyn Phipps, Memphis, Tennessee

The Patriots vs. the Aristocrats in *A Tale of Two Cities*

Students become intellectually and emotionally involved with the spirit of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (or books describing similar circumstances) when they "join" either the Patriots (the peasants) or the Aristocrats (the upper class). The moment they take on their new identities, students see events of the French Revolution, along with the story and the characters, from a particular point of view. As members of opposing sides, both the Patriots and the Aristocrats produce three editions of a newspaper (the Patriots' publication is an underground newspaper), one edition for each of the novel's sections.

Before beginning their newswriting assignments, those members of the class who belong to the Patriots must understand what their purpose is: to stir the people to revolt. The Aristocrats, on the other hand, will try to reassure their audience, the upper classes, by telling them that because they are obviously superior, they are in no danger from the peasants' threats.

Before the students begin to write, you should hand out guidelines reminding them of the basic characteristics of a news story, a feature or human interest story, and an opinion article, such as an editorial or a letter to the editor. Organize your class in the way that suits you best. You may want to allow the two groups to organize themselves and assign their own subjects and types of articles, or you may decide that it's wiser for you to make the assignments. Whichever method you use, each student group is responsible for writing, revising, typing, and proofreading its newspaper articles. How you produce the papers will be dictated by your school's facilities—mimeograph, word processor, duplicator, photocopier—but students should cut, arrange, and paste up the pages, as well as take responsibility for reproducing, collating, and distributing the finished editions.

In the class discussion following each production, have students compare the two newspapers and draw conclusions about point of view and slanted writing. Ask students to point out clues that identify fact as opposed to opinion, and to discuss techniques the writers used to manipulate their readers' thinking. Question the motivations behind the writing: Which are selfish? Which are altruistic? Does either motive belong exclusively to one side or the other?

In assigning articles to be written, some topics will clearly be more in the domain of one group than the other. For example, the Patriots may, using code, introduce a new spy, describe where and how to get weapons, explain the use of the rose in Madame Defarge's hair, or have Madame Defarge write an editorial calling for vengeance on the St. Evrémondes. The Aristocrats, on the other hand, might report on the activities of the resurrection men and the rise of similar events or write an editorial on why the upper class is superior. The most interesting assignments come from the topics that both sides can write on from opposing points of view; for example, the trials of Charles Darnay, the accidental killing of Gaspard's child by Monseigneur the marquis, and the storming of the Bastille.

Rita Little, Killeen High School, Belton, Texas

Research Skills Using Lee's *Mockingbird*

I like to seize every chance to integrate all the language arts skills in my teaching. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* offers rich opportunities to do just this. I use a research activity with her book that works successfully when my students are midway or completely through the reading. The project takes two or three class periods—one in the library and one or two in the classroom. What I like about it is that it introduces and/or gives practice in doing library research and notetaking, documentation of sources, and the connecting of research information to ideas found in a work of literature. Additionally, students write a short formal essay, report orally to the class, and participate in informal discussion. By the time the project is complete, my students have exercised all their English skills.

From a close reading of Lee's classic, I've developed a list of research essay topics, stated as questions, that add to students' understanding of and appreciation for the novel. I either assign questions to particular students or ask them each to choose the most appealing topic. I check the topics off until all are taken. (I prepare enough copies of the list for each student and librarian to have one, along with a few extras for insurance.)

Next I make arrangements with the librarians for use of the library and for their assistance. The list clues them in on what books the students will need. Then, toward the end of the class period before library day, I distribute the topic list to students and explain that the project entails:

1. that they look up information in the library for their topic, take notes on what they find, and record full documentary details of their source or sources (I provide samples for them to follow).

2. that from their notes, they're to develop a brief formal essay (noting that some topics will require more writing than others) that relates that information in their own words. Their essays should incorporate direct and indirect quotations from their sources along with correct documentation (again I provide examples).
3. that finally they'll report informally to the class on their topic, including where and how they got their information.

As the reports are given in class, students record answers to the research questions on their copies of the topic sheets. When everyone has reported, all students have information on each topic.

Here's the topic list I use (page numbers refer to the 1960 Warner Books edition of *To Kill a Mockingbird*):

1. Explain the background of and qualifications for the Pulitzer Prize for Literature. Then give the year Harper Lee won this award.
2. Identify and give some biographical information about Charles Lamb, who is mentioned in the foreword to the novel.
3. These novels are listed on page 12: *Tarzan, The Rover Boys,* and *Tom Swift.* Name the author of each book and write a brief description of each novel or series.
4. Who was the Dewey referred to in Chapter 2? Explain how knowing who he is gives insight into this scene in the novel.
5. Explain the Dewey Decimal System and how it works.
6. Tell what *kudzu* is, how and where it grows, and what its origin is (p. 55).
7. Identify and describe some of the flora detailed in the novel: live oaks, magnolia trees, azaleas, cannas, geraniums, and camellias.
8. Give information about Appomattox and tell why it is important to folks in Maycomb.
9. Explain what libel is and give some examples. What type of punishment does it entail?
10. Find and write down a recipe for Lane cake (p. 64). Tell the story of its origin.
11. Describe and give a brief explanation of the W.P.A.
12. Explain the National Recovery Act. Tell why Atticus says that it was "killed by nine old men" (p. 254).
13. Tell who Robert E. Lee was and how knowing his identity explains why the clerk of the court used Ewell's full name (p. 172).

14. Identify J. D. Rockefeller and tell why anyone living in 1935 would know his name.
15. Give details of what Eleanor Roosevelt attempted to do for civil rights (p. 237).
16. Describe what the Civil Rights Movement is and how Montgomery, Alabama, plays an important role in it.
17. Briefly tell about the Ku Klux Klan, including details of its history during the 1930s.
18. Give background information on the Brown vs. the Board of Education case and tell how it does or does not apply to the theme of this novel (p. 207).
19. Tell what Harper Lee, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, and Carson McCullers have in common. Provide more details than simply where they live or lived.
20. Tell who William Jennings was and why crowds gathered to hear him.
21. Explain what hydrophobia is, whether there's a treatment for it now, and if so, what it is.
22. Give a brief history of the A. M. E. Church (p. 117).
23. Describe what a tapeworm is, how prevalent it is in the United States, and how a person who has one is treated.
24. What are Blackstone's *Commentaries?* Quote a short passage from them.
25. Who was Herbert Hoover and what was a Hoover cart (p. 137)?
26. Tell from what source the word *phillipic* has come into our language and explain the word's origin (p. 106).
27. Describe a Jew's harp and how it's played. Tell how it got its name and whether it's played today (p. 95).
28. Explain the cause of, remedies (old and new) for, and treatment of pediculosis (p. 30).

Patty Forbes, St. John's School, Houston, Texas

Fables à la Thurber

Having always considered the fable to be a somewhat "juvenile" form of literature, I had never considered using it on the high school level. I am, however, now convinced that the writing of fables provides a viable, stimulating challenge for the high school student. I have James Thurber's versatile abilities to thank for this keen insight.

Anthologized in most textbook series, James Thurber, with his keen perception of the unexpected, unlikely aspects of human nature, has been a perennial favorite with high school students. The freshness of his witty style and the seriousness of his thematic preoccupation with the antihero in American society appeal to a wide range of students.

After reading and discussing "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and "The Catbird Seat," I introduce my students to some of Thurber's fables. "The Unicorn in the Garden" has long been a favorite; however, it is only one of many uniquely humorous fables found in *Fables for Our Time, and Famous Poems Illustrated.* In this 1940 volume, Thurber has not only included a substantial number of fables, but he has also illustrated each one.

I divide the class into groups of two and give each group a copy of one Thurber fable. Students are to read the fable they have been given and then to illustrate it. This activity can be done in about forty minutes. Each group then reads their assigned fable to the class, pausing before reading the moral to accept guesses as to what the moral is. (As a "reward" for concentrated, creative thought, extra credit may be given to students guessing the most morals.) The group then shows its illustration, and I show the one done by Thurber. Students are generally convinced that their illustrations are "better" than Thurber's. Each group is also given the opportunity to analyze just how its fable is characteristic of a Thurber theme. I then display the illustrations done by all classes so that students in each class are able to see the graphic responses of all groups.

The next step in this process is to have each student write his or her own Thurber-like fable. A fable has been defined for them as a brief tale which uses animals for its central figures and which states a moral. I give the students the following requirements:

1. The moral of your fable should apply to life for teenagers of the 1980s.
2. Inject humor, notably following the slight twist in conventional morals and other techniques typical of Thurber.
3. Your fable should run between 250 and 500 words.
4. Illustrate your fable with line drawings.
5. Have your rough draft ready to share in a small group on the date assigned. Use suggestions from others in the group (as you see fit) to guide you in making revisions for a final draft.
6. Turn in your final draft according to class standards for a formal paper—and include your line drawings.

After turning their papers in, students are given the opportunity to read their fables and to share their illustrations with the class. Seldom do

I have such enthusiastic response to the sharing of papers, and seldom do I get this high degree of creativity in a writing assignment.

Barbara Freiberg, University Laboratory School, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

The Fairy Tale as Literary Form

As part of a folk literature unit, I ask each of my junior high school students to bring in at least one book of traditional fairy tales (such as those of the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, or Charles Perrault). On the appointed day, I have students look through their books, pick three stories, and write down the opening sentence from each. Then they share their most interesting story beginnings aloud. After hearing a number of these, we discuss what qualities these beginnings share—for example, the setting is vaguely long ago and far away; char-

acters are either princes and princesses or poor peasants; the tales' diction, style, and tone have a characteristic simple quality.

Next I make this assignment (with due dates added):

1. Choose four fairy tales to read, two that you're already familiar with and two that are new.
2. As you finish each tale, write a summary of it to be handed in.
3. After you've read and summarized all four tales and received your summaries back from me, make a list of elements common to the stories (for example, happy endings, magic, three obstacles to overcome).

At this point, students share their lists in a class discussion. Then, as a group, they compile a list of qualities that mark the fairy tale as a form of literature. I record this list on the chalkboard, and they write it in their notebooks. Then the group composes a prose definition of the fairy tale. The definition, too, is recorded on the chalkboard for general use and in notebooks for individual use. During the discussion we discover that some stories commonly thought of as fairy tales (for example, "The Little Match Girl") don't fit the qualifying characteristics. We also learn that several versions of the same tale exist and discuss those variants.

By this point, students have read, summarized, discussed, and made conclusions about this literary form. They're armed with a list of characteristics and a definition for *fairy tale.* As a final step, each student writes an original fairy tale. Before final copies are turned in, small groups share rough drafts of their stories, listening to make sure each story contains the necessary qualities for a fairy tale. The final products are collected to produce a class anthology.

You may want to refer to Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales,* J. R. R. Tolkien's *Tree and Leaf,* and other sources on this genre.

Mary Whiffen, Pomona Junior High School, Suffern, New York

Restyling the Book Review

I wanted my junior high students to enjoy books, and, at the same time, I wanted them to vary their reading selections as well as to reflect creatively on what they'd read. So I tried a new approach that has met these goals happily. My formerly reluctant readers now can't wait to start their next book.

Part of the reason for this reversal in attitude is that I've made book reporting an optional rather than a required activity. An optional assignment creates the incentive to earn extra credit points. I also let students

choose their own books within a given category as long as they've not read the book before. I try to guide students toward titles that suit their reading ability, but if the first one they try is inappropriate, they generally set that book aside and look for another on their own.

At the beginning of the school year, I post a month-by-month list of book categories and ways of reporting. For example, here's the list I used last year:

	Type of Book	*Method of Response*
September:	Biography/ Autobiography	Create a collage that highlights some events in the person's life or that reveals some aspect of his or her traits, lifework, or accomplishments.
October:	Ghost or Horror Stories	On an assigned day, the classroom will be darkened. By light of a single candle, oral presentations of the stories should send chills down the audience's spines.
November:	Romance or Sports	Write an additional chapter of several pages or write a different ending to the book.
December:	Children's Books	Arrange with a preschool or an elementary school teacher or a young children's club sponsor for time to read one or more stories to the youngsters.
January:	Travel	Construct a shadow box or diorama of a scene from your book, or make an illustrated map of the area.
February:	Classroom Paperbacks	Write a report on the book, telling what the author's purpose was in writing it and whether the author succeeded. (If so, why? If not, why not?) Tell why the story and the characters are believable or not. Show how the characters were changed by events in the novel. Then tell what you learned or how you were changed by reading the book.

March:	Mysteries	Get together with one or two other students and plan a panel discussion for the class about mysteries, perhaps using different books by the same author or a similar type of mystery by different authors.
April:	Science Fiction	Write a letter to the author asking questions, making comments, or expressing your reaction to the book. Mail the letter. (I'll help you locate the address.)
May:	Novel of Your Choice	Prepare a publicity campaign for your book. You might design posters, write a radio or television script, plan newspaper ads and reviews, design a book cover and write the jacket "blurb," or write a publicity letter to accompany a complimentary copy of the book sent to a potential reviewer.

Kevin Walter, Manchester Junior High School, North Manchester, Indiana

Role-Playing

All of us at different times and in varying degrees feel like outsiders. All of us, too, have at times made others feel excluded—sometimes deliberately and sometimes out of ignorance. Normally, we avoid or block out such encounters and feelings. But students need to be reminded of how it feels to experience prejudice (or how it feels to show prejudice toward others) to get them into the right frame of mind for reading a book that deals with prejudice. In this way, they can more readily identify with and understand the book's protagonist.

Before students read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* or any other book with prejudice as a theme, I find it helpful to put them into the role of an outsider in a social situation. Role-playing is a direct and dramatic way of getting students to understand other people's feelings. It also gives them practice in thinking and in imaginative skills as well as in speaking before a group.

I use role-playing situations that call for three participants: a victim, a perpetrator, and an arbitrator whose responsibility it is to resolve the

conflict that's been played. I remind each actor to stay in character throughout the scene. Then the actors trade roles twice until each actor has had a chance to play the victim, the perpetrator, and the arbitrator. Sometimes I use the same situation three times; other times I use three different settings. Meanwhile, I direct the rest of the class to identify with one role during each scene and then to identify with a different one for each of the other two.

After the acting, while their emotions and thoughts are fresh, students write about what they thought and felt in each role. Then they write about any conclusions or insights they gained from the activity.

Here are some suggested role-playing situations. Use ones that suit your student population without unduly touching any nerves.

1. At a school in the 1920s that has only recently allowed black students to enroll, a teacher advises a black male student to change his career goal from that of lawyer to carpenter.
2. In the 1940s, a male student from a poor family, who is a Catholic in a predominantly Protestant school, gets a warning from another candidate not to run for student body president.
3. During the 1960s, a gifted female athlete is told by the school principal that she cannot try out for the boys' basketball team.

Bob Ingalls, Mt. Vernon High School, Fairfax County, Virginia

Activity Cards Allow Individual Exploring

Keeping in mind that any group of students will have many different kinds of intelligence, a wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and skills, and uneven blocks of free time, I still like to provide different ways to enrich individual enjoyment of class literature readings. I also want students to appreciate their reading more fully, to apply it to their own lives, and to remember it pleasurably.

So I devised the activity card plan. My file of cards has developed gradually, but this voluntary plan has worked well with my ninth graders from the beginning. Students who want to explore further any works we've studied can go to the activity card file, look at the choices listed (one to a card), and select the activity that appeals to them most. I try to offer at least three different options for each work.

To show you the range of options I offer, here are the four cards I use to supplement the short story "Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird" by Toni Cade Bambara. Card One helps students explore, through research and writing, the title's significance; Card Two asks the student to write an

argument defending or opposing an issue; Card Three requires the student to join with one or several others and speak about an issue from all angles; and Card Four appeals to the musicians in the class.

Card One

1. Write a descriptive definition for the word *blues*.
2. Describe the mockingbird: its song, appearance, habitat, habits, traits, and any other pertinent characteristics.
3. Think about what you've learned and written in response to parts 1 and 2 and how knowing these facts might help a reader understand the story title. Then write an explanation of the title as it relates to the story.

Card Two

The grandmother's account of the suicide attempt had two points: (1) her hatred toward those who sensationalize, and (2) people's insensitivity toward others who are hurting. As you consider her interpretation of this event, think of arguments to prove or disprove her viewpoint and present them in essay form. If you need help getting started, talk with me.

Card Three

The issue of invasion of privacy is often at odds with First Amendment rights. Clip articles from recent newspapers or magazines that illustrate conflicts arising between the press, who want to inform, and individuals, who want privacy. Read different sources on the same incident to get as many different views as you can. Record your observations and any conclusions, then do one of these two activities:

1. Frame a statement to be debated in class by you and a partner.
2. Set up a panel discussion of the issue.

Card Four

Play (or bring in a recording of) a blues solo, or organize an instrumental ensemble to demonstrate improvising (or "jamming") for the class.

Faith L. Reynolds, Smithtown, New York

Making Nonfiction Nonthreatening

Let your students read what interests them. After all, you want them to become lifetime readers, right? You can gently push them toward that goal without weighing yourself down under the paper load. One of the fringe benefits of encouraging diversity in reading is that students who like what they read are great salespersons. Soon others in the class (and other classes, too) are demanding a copy of this or that title. They don't want to be left out!

I've used the following approach with great success in getting teenagers interested in reading serious adult nonfiction. First, I distribute copies of an annotated list of book titles that I've read and that I think will appeal to my students. While the students look over the books, I assure them that there will be no written reports afterwards. What they will do is take a brief written test (part short-answer, part letter-writing) and then make an oral presentation to the class.

In preparing your list, you may want to limit the titles to one type of nonfiction, such as biography, collected essays, or scientific and sociological subjects. In any case, adapt the list to your objectives, to your students' needs and interests, and to local community standards. Also make sure the titles are readily available (several copies of each) in your classroom or in school and neighborhood libraries.

I set a day when students bring in the book of their choice and get my approval. I allow substitutions of titles when a request is reasonable. Then I let students use class time to start reading, reminding them that the books should be read by the end of three weeks.

On the assigned date, I distribute a two-part test to each student on the book he or she has read. Part One has three or four short-answer recall questions to determine whether the student has read the entire book. Part Two asks the student to write to another student a letter that gives the main idea of the book along with a couple of examples to illustrate that idea. The letter writer then either recommends or does not recommend the book to the letter recipient, giving the reasons for the choice.

On the following day, students discuss their books in groups. Those who have read the same title are automatically in the same group. Students who have read books no one else has read may be grouped according to the books' form or theme and can describe their books to one another. At this time, the groups also plan for the following day, when they will make their presentations to the class. Each presentation should give the class some feeling about the book's (or books') themes, tone, or style. Students might choose to dramatize a representative scene or to

take turns reading selected passages. Every group member should participate in some way. I also suggest the use of some type of visual or audio aid to accompany the presentation, perhaps a collage, a book cover design, or some background music to complement the tone or mood of the book.

Working together in this way creates a sense of understanding, excitement, and cooperation among the students and about the books.

Some titles I've used successfully include:

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

Jacques Cousteau, *Jacques Cousteau's Calypso, The Silent World, Jacques Cousteau's Amazon Journey,* and other titles

Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

James Herriot, *All Creatures Great and Small, All Things Bright and Beautiful, All Things Wise and Wonderful,* and others

Shirley Jackson, *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons*

Jean Kerr, *How I Got to Be Perfect*

Ron Luciano, *The Umpire Strikes Back* and *Strike Two*

Mike Royko, *Sez Who? Sez Me!*

Andy Rooney, *A Few Minutes with Andy Rooney* and *And More from Andy Rooney*

Jesse Stuart, *The Thread That Runs So True*

Paul Theroux, *The Kingdom by the Sea* and *The Old Patagonian Express*

Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century* and *Guns of August*

Dagny D. Bloland, Whitney Young Magnet High School, Chicago, Illinois

Thinking about the Greek Myths

I find Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives to be useful in planning lessons on many topics. It gives me a way to move my students through activities that demand increasingly more complex modes of thinking. Here's how I make use of the taxonomy in teaching a unit on Greek mythology.

You can adapt this teaching technique to the grade level, needs, and special interests of your class. One method is simply to distribute copies of the list of activities, asking students to select one or more that interest

them. Another option is for you to organize the class into six groups, placing students in the group activity that most nearly matches the members' level of thinking. Then assign the appropriate activity to each group to complete as a team. For purposes of identification, I've labeled each activity group with its thinking skills level.

Knowledge

1. Make a chart of the major gods and goddesses, identifying the area ruled by each and listing the physical and emotional characteristics of each.
2. Make sketches or watercolors of several major gods and goddesses. The drawings should represent the god's or goddess's emotional and physical characteristics, and the setting should illustrate the area they rule.

Comprehension

1. Keep a notebook of the gods and goddesses as they're introduced in your reading. Then prepare a chart showing the family relationships.
2. Most mythologies provide an explanation for their own beginnings. Write a verse about the origins of several Greek gods, then work with several other students to present a choral reading of the verses to the class.

Application

Bring several Greek immortals to visit the modern world through an ad, skit, or story. Show how the individual personalities adapt (or fail to adapt) to modern life. Do their powers work in today's world? If so, let your writing show how.

Analysis

The force is still with us! Greek mythology is part of our cultural heritage. Select a subject area such as art, music, psychology, literature, science, or advertising and collect terms used in that field that are taken from Greek myths. Analyze the reference to the god or goddess and explain how it suits the adaptation.

Synthesis

1. Some experts believe that one purpose of a myth is to preserve truth. A recent government report suggested that one way to keep

people away from a dangerous radioactive materials site in the far future might be to create a myth about it. Following this vein of thought, create a myth that reveals a truth you think our present world needs to help people cope with the problem you've identified.

2. As you read the myths, make a record of attitudes expressed by the gods and goddesses toward men and women. Also record attitudes that human characters express about their deities. Use these details to write about the story's theme or message.

Evaluation

1. Argue for or against a theme expressed in a myth; for example, the theme of pride as a sin from the story of Arachne.
2. Create a story, play, or comic strip which uses a theme from mythology as its topic, such as our lack of free will.

Joanne Van Syckle, Fancher School, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

3 Prewriting and Writing

How do I know what I think until I see what I say?

E. M. Forster

Like Forster, our students often don't know the shape their writing will take until they've done some prewriting—put their thoughts down on paper where they can see them. And the ideas in this chapter will help them do that, with creative assignments for journals, mock newspapers, descriptive essays, and autobiographies. There is even an idea that shows you how to both assess your students' needs more effectively and cut down on your grading time—simultaneously.

"Getting to Know You . . ."

Setting the right tone at the beginning of a school year can get your class off on the right track. I like to find out in the first week how well my new set of students can follow directions, how well they understand the mechanics and grammar of writing, how creatively they can use their imaginations, and what their special interests and skills are. Then I know how best to tailor my assignments to develop each one's abilities.

This sounds like a formidable task, yet the method we've used with success in our district is easy and fun. You'll need to have a supply of typing and construction paper ready. If you want the project done in class, also collect stacks of old magazines, a box of scissors, some glue, and some multicolored marking pens.

Early in the first week of the semester, tell your students they are to create an illustrated autobiography. These are the directions I use, but you can adapt them to your goals.

1. Give some thought to the key parts of your life, past and present. Jot down a list of your personality traits, special interests and talents, turning points in the direction of your life, people who've influenced you, your family and friends and pets.

2. For this project, I'll give you seven sheets of typing paper and a sheet of construction paper.
3. From old magazines, clip out between six and eight pictures (perhaps a few extra will give you ones to choose from) that suggest or illustrate key items on your list of details about yourself.
4. Paste one picture on each sheet of typing paper, leaving space for writing.
5. Write no fewer than two and no more than four sentences for each picture, explaining why you selected it. Now arrange the pages in chronological or thematic order.
6. Using the sheet of construction paper for your cover, neatly letter it with a title (for example, "All about Me," or "Me in Pictures," or "An Astronaut in the Making") that captures what your series of pictures illustrates. Use another clipping for the cover if you want. Fasten the cover and pages together with colored tape or staples.
7. Your illustrated autobiography will be graded on how well your pictures and explanations support each other, on correct spelling (use the dictionary!), grammar, and usage, and on the total effect and visual appeal of your booklet.
8. The completed autobiographies are due on _____.

Make your own illustrated autobiography along with your students, then plan time for everyone to read the finished booklets. Your students want to know more about each other and about you just as much as you want to know about them.

Merlyn Spain, Northbrook High School, Houston, Texas

A Journal-Writing Pot of Gold

Directed journal writing gives students the kind of daily practice in composing they need to turn quantity into quality. I give my students general journal-topic lists which they keep for reference. Students are free to write on any of the topics in any entry. Picking something from the list simply provides a starting point and a direction. Sometimes I also make specific journal writing assignments that expand on something we're doing in class.

You can adapt the following topic list to suit your needs—or use it as a guide to draw up your own. In either case, I think you'll be happy with the results. (I also remind students to date each notebook entry, to write every day, and to use both sides of the paper.)

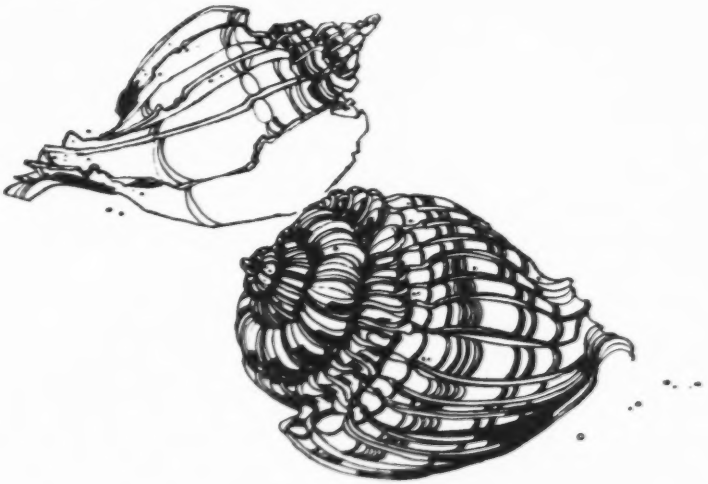
1. Begin or end some of your journal entries by completing this statement—and commenting on it, if you wish: "Today was like a . . ."
2. Start pages of lists of various types and add to the lists at any time. Some ideas to get you started: things that make you angry or sad or happy, pet peeves, sounds you hear as you sit quietly or as you think back over your day, snatches of conversations overheard, books you've read, songs you like, dreams or hopes, memories, questions you'd like answered, things you'd like changed. Later you can use these lists to write other entries—poems or stories or opinion pieces.
3. Try to explain something that puzzles you.
4. Write your opinion on a current controversial topic such as censorship of rock music, a new school rule, or raising the drinking age.
5. Look at yourself in the mirror for as long as you can stand it. Describe what you see.
6. Tell about a funny experience you've had (or a sad or exciting or frightening or challenging experience).
7. Describe the most expensive thing you ever bought and how you got the money for it; tell why you wanted it and whether it was worth the price.
8. Describe an older person you know or have known.
9. Describe a person. Include details such as physical characteristics, personality traits, and how others regard that person.
10. What can you tell about a person by stepping into his or her room? What could an outsider tell about you by stepping into your room?
11. Tell about your most prized possession and explain why you treasure it.
12. Based on your experiences, give advice on a particular topic to a younger person.
13. Tell what you like about the area where you live as well as what you don't like about it.
14. If you had only two days left to live, tell how you would spend them.
15. Describe a time when you lost something important to you. What were you thinking and feeling? What did you do to try to get it back? If you got it back, or if you didn't, how did you feel?

Irina Markova, U-32 High School, Montpelier, Vermont

Natural Writing—Three Ways

My eighth graders have fun using objects from nature for writing assignments—and in the process they learn to write for several purposes and audiences. Perhaps because they enjoy the writing, the results are of a quality that pleases me, too.

I collect things like shells, feathers, dried flowers and weeds, nuts (in their shells), small rocks, or small potatoes. Then I put two of one type of object (for example, two similar shells) on each student's desk just before class begins.



Assignment One

1. Write a description of *one* of the objects on your desk. Your details should distinguish this object from its partner. Leave the written description on your desk.
2. When I call "time," everyone moves to another desk according to my directions.
3. Read the description on the desk you move to. Handle the two objects on the desk and place the one you think fits the written description on top of the paper.
4. Return to your own desk when I call "time" again. If the person who read your description placed the correct object on your paper,

ask your reader which details led to the correct identification. If the wrong object is there, find out what information was lacking to make a correct choice. Or learn whether the fault lay in the person's failure to read the description accurately or completely.

5. Write an explanation on the same paper as to why your description worked or didn't work. Also tell what you learned from doing this exercise.

Assignment Two

Write a description of your object for a science book. You may need to research some special information and terminology before you can write for such a book.

Assignment Three

Write a one- or two-page story or narrative poem about your object. Decide whom you're writing the story for before you begin.

At the completion of all three writing assignments, we discuss how and why the writing styles vary when the purpose for writing and/or audience change.

Jo-Ellen S. Wood, Cohasset Junior/Senior High School, Cohasset, Massachusetts

The Newspaper: Read, Respond, and Write

I use a four-week response writing project to encourage students to become aware, thinking, acting citizens. The newspaper is my tool; my method is to give students practice in skimming many articles, selecting those that interest them for a more thorough reading, and then responding to or evaluating the articles. Meanwhile, they're practicing all their English skills—reading, thinking, writing, speaking, and listening.

Here's how I organize my response writing project:

1. Each week students look through the previous week's newspapers and pick one article (not a cartoon, sports story, or advertisement) to read carefully and then respond to. I encourage them to choose a different type of article (straight news, editorial, feature, human interest) each week.
2. On the assigned day, students bring their articles to class. I ask them to form an opinion or express a reaction about the story—

they might agree or disagree with an opinion, recognize slanted writing, be outraged by an injustice, or find the situation ridiculous or funny or sad. Whatever way they respond—intellectually or emotionally—they are to express those reactions and then back them up with reasons or explanations.

3. Students turn in their articles—labeled with the name of the newspaper, date, section, and page number—along with rough drafts of their response essays.
4. When the four weeks are over and the four essays complete, I return all four papers to each student and ask them to select the one they regard as their best effort.
5. Then I ask them to revise, polish, and prepare a final draft of that essay. Small-group peer editing works well for this step.
6. After I've evaluated the completed essays (I put the grade and any comments on the back or on a separate sheet), students mount both the original articles and their own essays on construction paper. Meanwhile, students have talked informally about their own and one another's articles and responses. Now they can see and read all the news items and essays. (It's great when more than one write on the same story!)

A fringe benefit of this unit is that everyone learns to know each other better. In doing so, they gain new respect for their classmates as well as discover new ways of looking at events of the day.

Jane Gerencher, Moravian Academy School, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

History Makes the News

Turning history into news makes my students' book reports on historical novels challenging and interesting projects. To gain insights into a novel and its setting (books may be set in any era from ancient times through World War II), each student produces a mock-newspaper poster developed from the novel's story and events of the time period.

First, I distribute guidelines with examples for the different types of newspaper writings I'll ask students to include on their posters: a lead news story, an editorial, a human interest story, a one-paragraph book review, classified ads, and a commercial ad. Students may also sketch editorial cartoons or cartoon strips and/or find pictures that could illustrate events in the story (they should write captions for these). Each person invents a name for his or her mock newspaper that reflects the novel's historical period.

I ask the class to study carefully the makeup of current daily newspapers—the way a page looks, the style used for headlines and picture captions, the location of particular types of stories (straight news first, editorial section later, and so on). While I'm not expecting a professional-looking newspaper as the end product, I do want to see an understanding of the way a newspaper is laid out. The mock newspaper's content should provide evidence that the student understands both the novel and the time period in which it is set.

I provide this brief guide for the poster assignment:

> *Lead story with headline:* In straight news-story style, recount the events of the novel's most exciting or dramatic scene. (Precede the story with the dateline—the place and time of the event. Give yourself a byline.)
>
> *Editorial:* The topic for your opinion piece could be taken from a controversial issue in the novel or from one of its central themes. Make sure you present all sides of the issue.
>
> *Human interest story:* This could be a personality piece about one of the novel's characters, or it might describe a minor scene that appeals to human emotions (one that is sad, funny, admirable, or embarrassing). A human interest story could also be about something representative of the period, such as the plight of a particular family during a natural or human disaster.
>
> *Book review:* Give the title of your book, author, copyright date, and number of pages. Then write a two- to four-sentence plot summary and a recommendation (favorable or otherwise) of the book.
>
> *Classified ads:* Write several of these under such categories as Help Wanted, Jobs Wanted, For Sale, For Rent, Lost & Found, Personals, and Announcements. Each item should be drawn from events in the novel or from the historical period in which it occurs.
>
> *Commercial ad:* Create an ad for a product representative of the novel's time period and write it in a style that would have appealed to readers of that era.

When I've checked the rough drafts, I ask the students to copy the stories (they may print, type, or use a word processor) into columns and then to arrange the columns in newspaper fashion on white tagboard. When completed and displayed in our room, these news posters provide days of conversation and interesting information for all my classes.

Marianne Rossi, George Sharswood School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Literary Essayists, News Columnists, and Student Writers

When we do our classroom unit on essays, I like to provide links between text authors and the world my students live in. As a way to do this, I ask each class member to become an expert on a particular newspaper columnist.

The procedure I follow is this. First I make copies of an opinion essay on a topic I think will appeal to the class. We discuss the effect the writer intended (and how successful the result is), underline the evidence supplied to back up the point, observe any biases the writer has, and note the techniques that mark that writer's style.

Then the students are on their own for five weeks. They're to peruse newspapers and news magazines and then select a columnist whose subject matter and style appeal to them. Then each person collects opinion pieces by the chosen columnist, one a week for five weeks. On the assigned date, students bring the collected articles to class. I give out copies of the following guide for them to use individually as a working base for two or three class periods:

1. List the topic of each article, along with its purpose (e.g., to support, to argue against, to persuade, to amuse).
2. List the methods the writer uses to develop the topic (e.g., logic, facts, authoritative opinion, examples and anecdotes, emotional appeal).
3. Note what the writer specializes in. Is he or she a generalist, or does this person usually write on just one subject?
4. Analyze the writer's style with respect to
   a. sentence structure—long, short, mixed lengths; sentence patterns—varied, parallel, balanced.
   b. diction—types of nouns, verbs, figures of speech; frequency of adjectives and adverbs; use of allusions.
   c. tone—ironic, straightforward, formal, casual, sarcastic.
   d. vocabulary—words that interest you, are new to you, or are used in a way you hadn't seen before.

When the analyses of the columnists are complete, we spend a day or two in small groups when each student presents his or her columnist to the class. There are sometimes interesting comparisons made when more than one student has chosen the same columnist. Each group fills out a cover sheet listing the members' names and their columnists, along with details of what they learned about each columnist—subject matter, tone, and techniques or style. The cover sheet earns an equal grade for each

group member; this score I add to the individual analyses for a composite evaluation.

Many students continue to read "their" columnists—or ones from the group discussions—on their own following the study, and this bridging activity eases us into class discussion of literary essays. To round out the unit, students themselves write essays on topics of personal choice and expertise.

Claudia B. Wagner, Lower Merion High School, Ardmore, Pennsylvania

Mining for Information: The Art of the Interview

Studs Terkel showed us that interviewing at its best is indeed not merely a skill but an art. I like to think that when I help students learn how to mine for nuggets of information, they not only get practice in speaking, listening, and writing, they also learn personal relationship skills. With this project, students learn how to gain another person's confidence, put that individual at ease, and listen for what's interesting about another human being (thus peeling off the adolescent "me" focus). In the process, they grow in their understanding, respect, and admiration for others, often finding new role models.

To get students ready for this assignment, I bring to class (or have them bring) examples of magazine and newspaper interviews, a taped television interview, and some of Terkel's books. We take a couple of class periods to sample these interviews and discuss the questions and questioning techniques used in each. We look for answers to things like: What kinds of questions were used first? What cues from the answers helped the interviewer to ask another question—and which questions were prepared ahead of time? How did the interviewer switch topics? How did he or she keep the interviewee from wandering into irrelevant details?

Then we examine the different formats used for writing up an interview—the Question-Answer format, the Studs Terkel approach, and the feature story. We discuss what constitutes a good lead paragraph. Then we look at the advantages and disadvantages of each format and discuss such matters as how the writer rearranges or cuts out information to present it in an interesting, concise manner.

Next, I hand out half sheets of paper. Each student writes down one or more things they know quite a lot about, putting their names in the upper right-hand corner. I suggest things to help them get the list started, such as jobs they've worked at (or a parent's job), talents or hobbies they have, places they've traveled or lived, and unique experiences or interests.

Then I divide the class into groups of four or five. All the members of a particular group put their folded slips into a container. One member of the group draws (or I draw) a slip out. The person it belongs to becomes the interviewee. From the topic(s) on the list, the other group members produce a set of questions to ask this person. Meanwhile, the interviewees form their own group to discuss topics such as what their reservations are about being interviewed, as well as what they're looking forward to in the interview. Sometimes I have this group do some role-playing to practice being interviewed while the other students formulate their questions.

When I call "time," the interviewees return to their original groups. I allow twenty minutes for the interviews, and each interviewer is responsible for taking his or her own set of notes. (I let students compare their note taking after the interview.) The interviewee must not volunteer information, but should answer only the questions that are asked.

Using his or her notes, each interviewer writes an article that could appear in the school newspaper or the local paper's feature section. I show students how to incorporate both direct and indirect quotations in their writing, as many novice writers have problems with this skill. The interviewers write essays on a topic such as "What it felt like to be a celebrity for a day" or "What I learned about interviewing by being interviewed."

It's fun and instructive to share representative articles in class when they're completed.

Joyce Dom, Manchester High School, Manchester, Connecticut

Writing Away for the Future

Too often the tasks we ask students to do seem to them to be of no immediate use. Here's a practical way to give your young scholars practice in research, writing, reading, thinking, and speaking skills—and at the same time provide them with information they need for planning their futures.

Many students think they want to get into a certain college or trade school because it's prestigious or because that's where their friends are going. They give no thought as to whether the institution fits them—or they fit it (or, in some cases, whether they ought to enroll right after high school, delay enrollment, or not go at all). Gather from the counseling office and other sources all the materials you can that list colleges and trade and business schools. Give your students time to share the materials and to select from the lists three schools they want to find out more about.

Following a model that you provide, each student then writes a formal business letter to three or more schools asking for an admissions catalog and other pertinent materials. When students receive their catalogs, show them how to "read" such material in order to get the information they need to make a decision about that institution.

Caution students to study the catalogs in view of their own interests and goals, their personalities and social preferences, and their financial status. They should think about questions like whether they'd feel more comfortable in a large university or a small college setting. They should try to pick a school that will challenge their minds without overwhelming them. They should learn to identify clues that will help them decide if this is a place that can give them what they want.

Next, each student writes a list of the high school courses required for admission to the colleges or schools whose catalogs they have. They then prepare a chart or poster that serves as an easy reference guide to each institution they have researched and use the charts as a visual aid during an oral report on the schools for the whole class.

Afterwards, post the completed charts as a useful display available to everyone. Don't be surprised if you have guests from other classes dropping in to check for information they can use in writing away for their own futures!

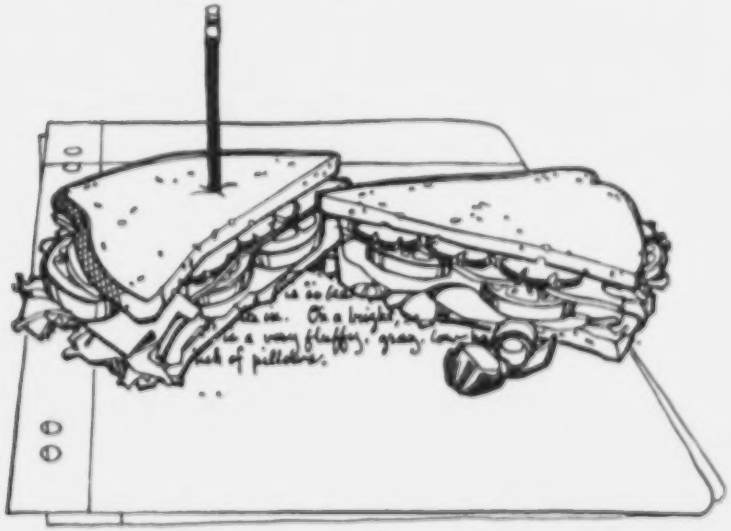
Arlene Hunt Knowski, Eisenhower High School, Blue Island, Illinois

Paragraph Sandwiches

To help my junior high school students visualize the construction of a paragraph, I draw an analogy between building a paragraph and building a sandwich. As a visual aid, I make construction paper sandwich parts—with dual labels, the parts of the sandwich and the analogous parts of a paragraph.

We begin by discussing the parts of a sandwich—top and bottom layers of bread, and a center, or filling, made of meat, cheese, vegetables and fruit, nuts, and/or some kind of spread. We talk about how we choose the ingredients for a particular sandwich with care. For example, I tell them that I prefer a soft white bread for a turkey sandwich, but I want Swedish or black rye with my roast beef. And I want lettuce and mayonnaise with the turkey—but I must have butter, brown mustard, dill pickles sliced lengthwise, and lettuce with my roast beef. The list could go on and on (especially if the class meets just before lunch!), but we must move to the analogy. It works something like this. (I demonstrate with the paper sandwich as we go along.)

1. You build your sandwich or your paragraph according to one of two approaches:
   a. You have the ingredients or information and ideas on hand and decide what to use, what to leave out, and how you will arrange or layer the ingredients to fill up the sandwich or the paragraph.
   or
   b. You think about the kind of sandwich (or paragraph) you want to build. Some ingredients (information) you already have, but you need to go to the supermarket (library) for the others. You must have everything needed to build a sandwich (paragraph) that satisfies both taste in eating (interesting writing style) and nutritional needs (informative, concrete details).
2. The top and bottom layers of bread can be compared to the topic sentence and concluding sentence of the paragraph. They *define* or *limit* what the sandwich (paragraph) can contain. They determine the makeup of the filling (the body of the paragraph). The bread layers (topic and concluding sentences) of the sandwich (paragraph) come from the same dough (express the same idea) but may be of different shape and design. That is to say, topic and concluding sentences both stress the main point, or purpose of the paragraph, but the topic sentence tells readers what to expect and prepares them for what follows, while the concluding sentence should leave readers with a flash of understanding and insight about the main idea that drives the point home.



3. The "spreads"—butter, mayonnaise, mustard, relish—we compare to those words in the paragraphs that make the sentences stick together (transitions) and also those that bring out the flavor of the idea (adjectives and adverbs). We point out that these words, like their counterpart sandwich spreads, should be used sparingly and in the right combinations to enhance, but not overwhelm, the paragraph detail—the filling. If the spreads are omitted, the pieces will not stick together, and the whole "sandwich" will fall apart.
4. The filling of the paragraph, like the filling of a sandwich, contains the "meat"—the detail that explains, argues, illustrates, defines, or narrates why and how the topic sentence is true. To be totally satisfying to the reader, the filling of a paragraph must have an ample supply of facts, concrete details, and specific examples; furthermore, these details must be arranged in a clear and logical progression that leads directly from the topic sentence to the conclusion. Otherwise, the paragraph—or the sandwich—provides no meaning or nourishment.

For whatever reasons, using the sandwich analogy to visually illustrate how to build a paragraph works. I've expanded this concept to the five-paragraph essay by constructing a "club sandwich." May your class build sandwich paragraphs that delight and nourish!

Paula Shepherd Lynn, Watkins Junior High, Houston, Texas

When Is a Fact Not a Fact?

To help my students think consciously about tone and style in writing, I set up situations or topics that give them practice in adopting different points of view on a particular subject. For example, for each of the following topics, students write three separate paragraphs, each from a different point of view. (Students may need to do research for some of the subjects.)

1. Describe Friday night's school dance
   a. the way you saw it.
   b. the way a chaperone saw it.
   c. through the eyes of the band's drummer.
2. Describe this year's fashions for teens
   a. from your viewpoint.
   b. from your parents' (or grandparents') viewpoint.
   c. from the point of view of a fashion designer.
   d. from a department store salesperson's point of view.

3. Describe a triple-scoop ice cream cone
   a. from a five-year-old's point of view on a hot July day.
   b. from the viewpoint of a Baskin-Robbins marketing director.
   c. as a specialist in nutrition sees it.
4. Relate a front page news story of your choice
   a. from your point of view.
   b. from your teacher's or your parents' point of view.
   c. from the point of view of a famous person from history.

Maryann Smith, Mogadore High School, Mogadore, Ohio

Training Time for Writers

Just as a track coach wants his or her team to practice running daily, stretching each athlete's limit more each day, so we English teachers want our classes to practice and to stretch their writing skills regularly. At the same time, we can't smother ourselves under the mass of paper such exercises yield. Here's one idea that two of us came up with that is tailored to accomplish these seemingly opposing objectives.

We distribute the following guide to each of our students, asking that they staple the guide to their journal folders.

1. Keep a folder of your daily writings. These will accumulate to become your portfolio. The folder remains in the room, so that all your work is in one place and you can see the progress you are making.
2. Each Monday you'll receive a list of four topics, one for each day, Monday through Thursday.
3. Pick up your folder as you come into class each day and begin writing on that day's topic. Plan for fifteen minutes of writing time before we begin the day's lesson.
4. On Friday, the first fifteen minutes are reserved for you to look through the week's four entries and select your best one. If you find discussion helpful in making your choice, pair off with another person and read your entries aloud to one another.
5. On some Fridays, the remainder of the period will be spent revising, expanding, and polishing your topic for a finished piece of writing to be graded. Other times, the essay revision will be a weekend assignment.
6. Turn the completed piece in on Monday for grading.
7. I'll check to see that the four entries are complete, then file the

graded essay in your folder. Each week's work is to be arranged in chronological order behind the assignment sheet.

8. Any time you are late for or absent from class, you're responsible for completing missed entries and/or essays as homework. To earn a grade, you must complete *all* the assignments for a given week.

We use a variety of weekly topics on themes that we think have student appeal; for example, friendship, loneliness, fear, school life, and family life. Sometimes we let students choose from more than four suggestions. For instance, here's an assignment sheet that we used recently:

For this week's portfolio writings, select *four* of the following six topics on the theme "Family Life."

1. What ingredients go into the making of a happy home? Does a happy home depend upon the house itself and its furnishings? Does it depend upon the people who live there? Does a happy home require both the material and the human factors? Think of a home you consider to be a happy one and describe it, the people who live there, their behavior, and their interaction. If you want, contrast this home to one you know of that is not a happy home.
2. Sometimes family members don't see eye-to-eye. Write a letter of advice to someone you live with—mother, father, sister, brother, or other person. Explain why you're giving this advice and what results you hope to see.
3. Television programs often depict family life. Pick a program featuring a family you enjoy. Describe the characters and explain why this program appeals to you.
4. Compare families you know with families you watch on television. Describe specific similarities and differences. Comment on the believability (or lack of it) of the television families, explaining why they are or aren't like "real" families.
5. People call their parents by different labels—*Mom, Ma, Mommy, Mama, Mother; Dad, Daddy, Pa, Papa, Father*—or sometimes by their parents' given names. Tell how these "variations on a name" suggest interesting and different types of parent-child relationships.
6. The word *homecoming* creates many, sometimes conflicting, thoughts and emotions. Think about a time when you returned home after being away for a period of time (or even at the end of the school day). Describe the circumstances of the leave-taking and what you saw and felt when you returned. What conclusions or insights can you suggest on the basis of such observations?

Teri Phillips and Susan Sherman, Mt. Healthy High School, Cincinnati, Ohio

Putting It in a Note to the Teacher

No matter how much I enjoy other aspects of teaching, grading papers for my composition classes was often sheer drudgery. I seemed to be making the same old corrections and comments on paper after paper—and my students continued to make the same old mistakes. Why waste my time marking papers, I asked myself, when no one cares enough to try to change?

Then I hit on an idea that really works—far better than I could have imagined. I decided to ask the students to accompany their next out-of-class writing assignment with a note to me on a separate sheet of paper. The note was to tell me what steps in writing this paper gave them trouble and what they did to try to solve the problems. I also suggested they make any other comments they wanted to about the writing of this paper. The results astounded me! I found that students analyzed and evaluated their own writing strengths and weaknesses, asked the questions that were bothering them, and told me how they felt about the finished product. All I had to do was comment or answer briefly. In some cases, I recognized that a student had misunderstood something said in class or in the text. I could correct the misunderstanding immediately instead of having it go on undetected.

I was so pleased with that first set of notes that I began doing the same thing each time I made an assignment. I used different questions with each one, depending upon the topic and the nature of the writing—and always gave students the option of making other remarks. A sample of questions I've used includes:

> How did you decide what order to use in arranging your details to build to the conclusion?
>
> What did you do to revise the rough draft for the final copy?
>
> How did you select the points for comparison in this essay?
>
> How long did you spend on this paper? What made it go faster or slower than others you've composed?
>
> What did you learn in class (from discussion, lecture, text, peer editing) that helped you most in doing this assignment?

At midterm and again at the end of the term, I like to ask one or both of these questions:

> How has your writing changed since the beginning of this class?
>
> In what ways would you like to change your writing in the future?

No matter how much my fingers itch to do so, I never correct errors on these notes. I don't want to risk blocking this open line of communication that has developed. Students sometimes even use their notes to explain

why an assignment needs to be late and then set a deadline they can meet. The note gives me a written commitment from them.

While I won't claim magic results (even though there's enough magic to please me!), I know that my students are now taking responsibility for their own writing rather than depending on me to do the evaluating. As a result, their writing does improve because they're thinking about it, not just tossing something off for me to worry about and then forgetting it.

A surprise for me is that I'm taking less rather than more time now to mark papers since the students are doing the work—and the learning. No longer do I feel like a drudge; rather, I feel like a successful, productive teacher.

Barbara Daniels, Camden County College, Blackwood, New Jersey